

GEORGIA

The US Forest Service (USFS) is in the process of revising its management plan for the Chattahoochee and Oconee National Forests. The agency plans to release for public comment a combined draft plan and draft Environmental Impact Statement in February 2003. The final plan is scheduled for completion by the end of September 2003. Congress has established this deadline by saying that it will cut off funding for the planning at that time, because the process has been going on long enough and the money is needed elsewhere. The notice of intent to revise the plans for these forests was issued in 1996 (Stephens 2003).

Jess Riddle has begun inventorying the Chattahoochee National Forest for Georgia Forest Watch. His findings will be included in an inventory and catalog of the Blue Ridge Province to be coordinated by Rob Messick. The Southern Appalachian Forest Coalition (SAFC) and The Wilderness Society are sponsoring the project. The final catalog is expected to be released in 2004 (Messick 2003).

The **Jones Ecological Researcher Center** at Ichauway in Baker County includes 14,800 acres (6000 ha) of open Longleaf Pine forest, 9,900 acres (4000 ha) of which have wiregrass as a component of the understory. At Ichauway, Drew et al. identified 1013 taxa, including 392 species that had not been found elsewhere in the county. Because of the presence of wiregrass, the preserve is assumed to have experienced minimal soil disturbance and frequent fire. However, the forest was logged (Drew et al. 1998).

Significant small old-growth areas in Georgia include a slough and island with Baldcypress on the Lower Altamaha River (near Jessup); two Baldcypress sites on the Ocmulgee River: one of them the privately owned 20- or 30-acre **Big Eddy Slough**, the other, a smaller site (Wilcox County) (Stahle 1993); a privately owned bay swamp, perhaps 25 acres in extent, which has not been cut "for a long, long time" on Seventeen Mile Creek (Coffee County) (Wharton 1993); a small stand dominated by hickories, Tulip Tree, and Northern Red Oak at the base of a granite monadnock in the 760-acre Panola Mountain State Conservation Park* (Rockdale County).

Ossabaw Island, off the coast of Georgia

A 25,000-acre barrier island, with 11,800 acres of upland, most of which is maritime forest that has apparently been only selectively cut in the past. Live Oak and Laurel Oak predominate in the canopy; palmetto and Wax Myrtle, in the understory. The island is owned by the Georgia Department of Natural Resources, which plans to keep it in a natural condition. Feral hogs are a problem, but the island has only one resident so cars do much less damage here than on Sapelo (Monroe 1993, Zoodsma 1998).

CHATTAHOOCHEE NATIONAL FOREST, in northern Georgia

As indicated above, Jess Riddle on behalf of Georgia Forest Watch, is in the process of identifying and delineating old growth in Chattahoochee National Forest. As of January 2003, not all the sites that he had identified had been digitized to obtain the

acreage accurately. We include below the sites that he had discovered before 2003, for which the acreage had been determined, and that are over forty acres in size. To help orient readers, we also include most of the sites described in the 1993 edition of this work. We also include sites over forty acres in size identified by Paul Carlson. Carlson, who studied for USFS old growth in the Chattooga River Watershed, classified sites as "A," "B," or "C." In sites for which he is our source, we include the classification.

Brasstown District

--**Brasstown Bald** (Union County). Varied old growth on the upper slopes, including, on the north face of the 4784-foot mountain, a "virgin" example of a mixed mesophytic, cool, moist cove forest. Yellow Birch in association with American Beech and Black Birch dominates the upper cove (Wharton 1978). This area is a boulderfield with Great Rhododendron and Mountain Maple in the understory (Riddle 2003a). Yellow Buckeye occurs at a lower elevation (Wharton 1978). Wharton estimates the old growth in the cove to be no more than 200 acres in extent, but says that the north face of Brasstown Bald has extensive additional old growth and that the south face supports some old growth, although here the trees are stunted (Wharton 1993). As of early 2003, Riddle had delineated 21 acres of old growth dominated by White Oak on the south side of the ridge south of Fodder Creek. In the upper part of the stand, trees in the canopy are less than 50 feet tall and a half foot in diameter, but the stand shows no signs of human disturbance (Riddle 2003b).

--**Cooper Creek Scenic Area**, north-central Georgia (Union County). Old growth of uncertain extent within a 1240-acre area. Georgia's Mountain Treasures describes the "majority of the area" as "probably largely old-growth forest" (The Wilderness Society 1995). According to Ben Sanders, a Fisheries, Wildlife, and Range Staff officer, the Scenic Area supports at least 100 acres of old-growth cove hardwoods, probably lightly cut in the past--with crosscut saws, as indicated by stumps (1993). Charles Wharton reported that not all sections of the 1240-acre Scenic Area look old, but that presumably the area was cut only lightly if at all (1993). Riddle is inclined to agree with Wharton. "The generally young appearance of the hardwoods in the area could be related to highly acidic soils that would limit hardwood growth rates, but still allow conifers to prosper" (Riddle 2003a).

--**Double Spring Knob***, within the Kelly Ridge Roadless Area (Township County). An old-growth stand, likely slightly more than 100 acres in size, on the north side of the knob. Oak constitutes the overstory throughout the stand, but the prevalent oak species varies, as does the composition of the understory. Along the main ridge extending south from the knob, White Oak is most common in the canopy. Northern Red Oak is most prevalent on the upper slopes on the north side of the knob.

--**Fork Ridge***, within the Kelly Ridge Roadless Area (Township County). Two areas of old-growth forest, Fork Ridge East, 55 acres, and Fork Ridge West, 14 acres, separated by an area of younger forest that does not appear to have been logged. The old growth is dry oak and subxeric oak. White Oak and Scarlet Oak predominate in the canopy on the ridge crest. Chestnut Oak dominates the adjacent slopes; Black Oak is scattered throughout. The Scarlet Oak are present in multiple age classes, and reach more than 193 years in age. Their seedlings are abundant. Thus on this site, they are

successfully competing with White and Chestnut Oaks, which reach ages of around 200 years, here as in other old-growth stands in north Georgia (Riddle 2003b).

--**Buck Knob*** (Towns County). Fifty-two acres of old growth on steep slopes on the southeast side of the mountain. Here patches of soil alternate with exposed rock. Chestnut Oak dominates; Pignut Hickory and Eastern Red-cedar are also important in the canopy. Above the rock outcrops, White Oak and Scarlet Oak as well as Chestnut Oak may appear in the canopy. Vaccinium species predominate in the understory. The steepness of the slope and the lack of saleable timber may have prevented logging (Riddle 2003b).

--**Ramp Cove** (Towns County). Old growth above 2800 feet, as only selective logging has occurred above this level. Scattered Tulip Tree, American Beech, and Northern Red Oak that are probably 100-150 years old grow between 2800 and 3200 feet. Some of these trees are unusually tall--Northern Red Oak up to 129 feet tall and Tulip Tree up to 159 feet. Above 3200 feet, Yellow Buckeye dominate, and, since these trees have relatively little commercial value, logging has been infrequent. Beech are common but are only in the understory and midstory. The tallest buckeye in Georgia, a 144-foot tree, grows here (Riddle 2002). Wharton and Duffy and Meier refer to an old growth stand of buckeye in a cove at an elevation of 3280 feet (Wharton 1993, Duffy and Meier 1992).

--**Sosbee Cove Scenic Area** (Union County). The Forest Service has described this 25-acre stand as "second growth" (Henderson 1990), but Duffy and Meier, saying that only "snags and downed or poorly-formed trees" had been removed, studied it as an example of primary forest (1992). Riddle writes that the cove contains "both old-growth trees and exceptional second-growth forest." A power line runs through the portion of the cove with the old-growth trees (Riddle 2001).

Cohutta District

--**Grassy Mountain*** (Murray County). On the north slope of the mountain, more than 200 acres of uncut old-growth acidic cove, dry pine, dry oak, and mesic oak forest with at least two areas of mixed mesophytic forest. Black Gum, Tulip Tree, hemlock, Chestnut Oak, and Northern Red Oak exceed 150 years in age. Pine-dominated forest on some of the ridges appears to be considerably younger, probably because of natural events. Chestnut was formerly common in the area. Rhododendron is abundant in the acidic cove forest (Riddle 2003a).

--**Rocky Face Mountain,*** on minor ridges on the west side, and on upper slopes is dry oak forest with a canopy of Chestnut Oak, White Oak, Red Maple, and White Pine. Submesic cove, which forms a transition between the dry oak forest and acidic cove forest, is in coves draining into the main stream on the west side of the mountain and on lower slopes. Acidic cove forest is along the main watercourse draining the west side of the mountain below 700 m and extending down to at least 600 m. Chestnut Oak, Eastern Hemlock, and Tulip Tree are common here. A dense understory of Great Rhododendron is present. The undelineated forest that is likely to be old growth includes two boulderfields to the north and the upper slopes between the east-west ridge and USFS road 64 (Riddle 2003b).

--**Rich Knob*** (Fannin County). Forest above 2800 feet that has been only selectively logged. Forest types are dry oak, rich cove, and submesic oak. Tulip Tree and

Northern Red Oak ages 100 to 150 years grow below 3200 feet. Two old-growth sites with a southeastern aspect have been delineated: Rich Knob South, 26 acres, and Rich Knob North, 17 acres (Riddle 2003b).

--**Betty Mountain North*** (Gilmer County). Old-growth forest, 129 acres in extent, lining the drainage that parallels Betty Creek to the north. The stand extends from at least 2240 feet (possibly as low as 2080 feet) up to 2700 feet. Tulip Tree is the dominant species in the mixed mesophytic forest that dominates most of the stand. In the lower reaches, the forest becomes acid cove, and Eastern Hemlock becomes more common. In the upper part of the stand, the understory is composed of scattered seedlings of canopy species; and the herbaceous layer includes ferns. In the lower part, *Rhododendron maximum* is thick; and the herbaceous layer is absent (Riddle 2003b).

Tallulah District

--**Redside Mountain*** (Rabun County). A total of 599 acres of Class A forest and Class B forest. On steep, rocky slopes and seepages the primary canopy species are Northern Red Oak and Chestnut Oak. Scarlet Oak, Chestnut Oak, White Oak, and Black Oak with some Pitch Pine dominate roughly 75 acres. Forty-four acres of forest are primarily Eastern Hemlock and Eastern White Pine on a very steep slope. The Class B forest included in this total was significantly disturbed as a result of the chestnut blight. Approximately 364 acres of forest are undisturbed (Carlson 1995).

--**Big Mountain*** (Rabun County). Four stands totaling 249 acres. The first stand, a Class A forest located at the top of the mountain, includes 68 acres of submesic, mixed oak forest. Though no evidence of logging was found, a recent fire killed the understory species. Chestnut Oak in this area were aged at 250 years. The second stand comprises 22 acres of Class A mesic and submesic forest dominated by Tulip Tree and oak. The average diameter for the poplar was 48" dbh (diameter at breast height). No evidence of human disturbance was found in this stand. The third stand consists of 24 acres of Class B xeric forest. This stand is primarily pine-oak with Pitch Pine and Shortleaf Pine. This area has been selectively logged. The fourth stand comprises 135 acres of Class B submesic forest. The stand is primarily mixed oak. The area has apparently been selectively logged (Carlson 1995).

--**Lower Big Ridge*** (Rabun County). A Class B, 170-acre submesic forest with 200+ year Chestnut Oak and White Oak prevalent. Black Oak, Scarlet Oak, Pitch Pine, and White Pine are also common canopy species. There is evidence of a American Chestnut salvage harvest, though the disturbance was minimal (Carlson 1995).

--**Oakey Top*** (Rabun County). Approximately 127 acres of Class B forest. A nearly pure stand of Chestnut Oak resides at the peak of Oakey Top. A cove area just below the peak hosts White Oak and Black Oak with diameters averaging 33" dbh. The south-facing slopes are much drier and harbor a "beautiful stand of very old Pitch Pine" (Carlson 1995). Chestnut salvage and selective pine logging have occurred within the stand.

--**Big Ridge North/Upper Sarah's Creek*** (Rabun County). Two Class B stands totaling 102 acres of old growth forest. The first stand consists of 45 acres of submesic forest atop Big Ridge. Canopy species include Chestnut Oak, White Oak, Scarlet Oak, and Pitch Pine. The second stand, located on the north side of Sarah's Creek, is a 57-acre,

mixed oak forest dominated by Chestnut Oak. Evidence of selective logging in both stands led to their Class B status (Carlson 1995).

--**Overflow Creek*** (Rabun County). Two stands totaling 76 acres. The first stand is 26 acres of Class A forest with Tulip Tree and mixed oak. Several trees were aged at over 200 years. The second stand is a 50-acre Class B forest dominated by mixed oaks and Eastern White Pine. There were no signs of human disturbance in either stand (Carlson 1995).

--**Hale Ridge*** (Rabun County). Sixty-two acres of Class B, subxeric forest. Large Pitch Pine and Chestnut Oak dominate the canopy, though Scarlet Oak, Blackgum, and White Pine are common canopy species. There is evidence of selective logging within the stand (Carlson 1995).

--**Upper Holcomb Creek*** (Rabun County). Two stands totaling 61 acres. The first stand is a 31-acre forest, designated Class A by Carlson, located along the creek bottoms between Holcomb Creek and Ammons Falls. The dominant canopy species are Eastern Hemlock, Tulip Tree, Mixed Oak, Red Maple, and White Pine. Higher on the slopes Chestnut Oak and White Pine dominate. The stand was aged at 150 to 255 years. Carlson did not observe any signs of logging in this stand, but Riddle found a cut stump that may indicate that some White Pine were removed (Riddle 2003a). The second stand is a 30-acre, Class B forest adjacent to the first stand. The dominant canopy species are Tulip Tree, Northern Red Oak, Chestnut Oak, and White Oak. A chestnut salvage harvest and some selective oak logging occurred in the stand (Carlson 1995).

--**Brown Mountain*** (Rabun County). Fifty-three acres divided into two stands. The first stand comprises 30 acres of Class A forest. This undisturbed forest is dominated by "striking stands" of Chestnut Oak aged at 200-300 years. The second and adjacent stand is 23 acres of primarily Chestnut Oak with many Eastern White Pine, Pitch Pine, and Scarlet Oak in the canopy. Some logging has occurred within this stand (Carlson 1995).

--**Rabun Bald*** (Rabun County). Old-growth forest, at least 50 acres in extent, "covering much of the broad top of 4696 foot-high Rabun Bald, the second highest mountain in Georgia (Riddle 2001).

--**Beck Ridge*** (Rabun County). Forty-eight acres divided into two stands due to differences in levels of disturbance. The first stand is a ridge top harboring a narrow band of White Oak and Chestnut Oak. One White Oak was aged at 290 years. The second stand has the same species composition, but old American Chestnut stumps and pockets of younger trees suggest some past disturbance (Carlson 1995). --**Ellicott Rock Stand**, in Ellicott Rock Wilderness (Rabun County). An "apparently virgin cove forest" described by DuMond in 1970. The forest was hardwood-hemlock with a rich herb layer and evergreen heath thickets. Wharton later tried unsuccessfully to find the stand (1993). The Forest Service says that since 1970 changes could have occurred in the forest that cannot be traced in the records (Jenson 1993).

Toccoa District*

--**Montgomery Creek** (Lumpkin County). On steep slopes in the upper portion of the Montgomery Creek watershed, 554 acres of old growth of varying forest types. The large ridges support communities with a significant component of pine, along with occasional gnarled, old Chestnut Oaks. Here Virginia Pine is the most abundant tree. The

pinus in these communities are relatively young, apparently because of fire or wind. The upper slopes and low ridges support dry oak forests. The dry forests on the highest elevations are dominated by Chestnut Oak; those on partly sheltered spur ridges, by White Oak. In the lower parts of the steep coves, are submesic oak forests in which Chestnut Oak associates with Tulip Trees. Mesic oak communities dominated by Tulip Tree and Northern Red Oak; and a few rich cove forests are also present. The rich cove forests include Tulip Tree, Northern Red Oak, White Basswood, and scattered Sweet Birch and Yellow Buckeye (Riddle 2002).

--**Long Mountain** (Lumpkin County). On the southern aspect, 120 acres of contiguous old growth, largely confined to a steep slope. The dominant canopy species over much of the area is Chestnut Oak, but White Oak, Northern Red Oak, Black Oak, and hickory may be locally abundant. The stand does not have a well-defined shrub layer, and the herbaceous layer is sparse in much of the stand. Several Chestnut Oak are more than 10 feet in circumference at breast height. Additional old growth of as yet undetermined extent is located on the slopes with an eastern aspect (Riddle 2002).

Cumberland Island National Seashore,* off the southern end of the Georgia coast

In the 36,506-acre Seashore, some 3000 acres of oak-palmetto that has been only selectively cut. Settlers grew cotton, indigo, olives, oranges, and other produce on the island, but saved the oak, particularly the Live Oak, for ship building. Since timbers were selectively removed, much of the oak-palmetto forest, which best represents the Live Oak, is still intact. The 4800 acres of mixed oak with pine or hardwood are second growth. The island has exotics, but very few are found in the oak-palmetto (Bjork 1998, Hillestad et al. 1975). Bratton and Miller found that island sites not known to have been farmed differ from areas that had been cultivated, as the unfarmed areas have a dense cover of Saw Palmetto with Redbay, few vines, and almost no grasses or forbs (Bratton et al. 1994). Native Longleaf Pine, including large trees, grow on the northern end of the island (Ferguson 2003).

The Seashore is comprised of two islands, Big and Little Cumberland Islands. The National Park Service owns approximately 20,000 acres. The state of Georgia, the Navy, the Army Corps of Engineers, and private parties also own land on the islands. All of the land is protected, Andy Ferguson, Management Analyst, told us. The responsibilities of the private owners are codified by law, and the military owners have entered into memoranda of understanding on the use of the land (Ferguson 2003).

Wassaw Island, within Wassaw Island National Wildlife Refuge, off the coast (Chatham County)

A 2000-acre coastal island covered with a maritime forest that has never been cut. On the north end of the island Live Oak dominates. In the south, the more recently formed part of the island, Slash Pine and Loblolly Pine are the predominant species. Between the two areas is a mixture of pine and hardwoods, including Slash Pine and Cabbage Palm. The US Fish and Wildlife Service burns the pine on the south end in winter to prevent summer wildfires. The people who once owned the island retain a 180-acre tract (Robinette 1993 and 2003).

Ebenezer Creek Swamp, east-central Georgia (Effingham County)

A 1350-acre swamp, all or most of which supports old-growth cypress-gum forest. The 1350-acre figure is sometimes given for the swamp and the old growth (Ambrose 1989, Harmon 1992), but Jonathan Streich describes the old growth as covering less than 1000 acres (1993). The virgin Baldcypress date back as far as the year 990 (Cleaveland 1992), yet are dwarfed (Wharton 1978). Diameters of the buttresses can exceed 10 feet. Above the swell, diameters are typically around four feet. None of the cypress reach 100 feet tall (Riddle 2003a). The dwarfing apparently results from the cypress living in a backwater stream, where they lack sufficient nutrients and oxygen (Wharton 1978). The swamp has more than one hundred private owners (Lutz 2003).

Sapelo Island, off the coast

A 16,000-acre barrier island with an estimated 1000 acres of maritime forest that has only been selectively cut. Live Oak and Laurel Oak are interspersed with Sweetbay. The understory is palmetto. The island also has 6000 acres of marsh, and extensive pine forest growing on land that was once farmed. The Georgia Department of Natural Resources owns the island. Feral hogs are a problem, as are island residents and visitors who drive through the forest. With these exceptions, the forest is being kept in natural condition (Monroe 1993, Zoodsma 1998).

Bear Island, eastern Georgia, within Savannah National Wildlife Refuge (Effingham County)

A 680-acre island with about 200 acres of unlogged forest. The old growth is bottomland hardwoods, mainly Sweetgum-cypress. The island, which was only recently purchased by the US Fish and Wildlife Service, is in the Savanna River. Feral hogs are a problem (Robinette 1993 and 2003).

Greenwood Plantation,* southwestern Georgia (Thomas County)

Within the 5200-acre plantation in the Clayhills, a stand of 500 acres of high-quality Longleaf Pine, often spoken of as “The Big Woods” (Kush 2001). Individual trees are up to 500 years in age, and many of them are very big. The stand is regarded as exemplary Longleaf and generally characterized as old growth (Ambrose 1989, Hermann 1990, Kush 2001, for example). However, it has been subject to limited logging, as it has been managed according to the Stoddard-Neel Selection Method for the past fifty years. In this method, single trees are selected for cutting “based on age (retaining old-growth), species (sparing longleaf in mixed pine stands), defects and crown size (first eliminating those with sparser crowns).” The method includes prescribed burning; and burning has been carried out at Greenwood for more than a hundred years (TNC Web 2002). As a result, the site supports “all native flora and fauna typical of pinelands” (Kush 2001). Residents include the Endangered Red-cockaded Woodpecker, Pine Snake, Gopher Tortoise, Bachman’s Sparrow, Wire-leaf Dropseed, and Yellow Fringeless Orchid.

In addition to the old growth, the plantation includes the Plateau, a Longleaf Pine sandhill community; Heard’s Pond, a 700-acre wetland; and a slope forest on the Ochlocknee River. The Greentree Foundation founded by Mrs. John Hay Whitney, which owns the property, plans to transfer ownership of it to The Nature Conservancy in September 2003. To prepare for the transfer, The Nature Conservancy assumed

management and began working with the Greentree staff in September 2002 (TNC Web 2002).

Wade Tract Preserve, southwestern Georgia (Thomas County)

Old-growth Longleaf Pine-Wiregrass savanna, 206 acres in extent (Kush 2001). The land is privately owned, but managed by Tall Timbers Research Station of Tallahassee, Florida. The site has experienced salvage logging (Hermann 1990). Flora and fauna are “intact” (Kush 2001). The Wade Tract is generally regarded as the highest-quality remaining Longleaf Pine-Wiregrass stand. The stand has been extensively studied (for example, Noel et al. 1998); and researchers visit it to learn what Longleaf Pine-Wiregrass should look like (Ambrose 1989, Hermann 1990). A dirt road bisects the preserve, a paved road runs along it on the East. Beyond the road and on other sides of the tract is Longleaf Pine managed by single tree selection (Engstrom and Sanders 1997).

Thomasville Plantations,* southwestern Georgia (Thomas County)

Various privately owned stands of old-growth Longleaf Pine in the Clayhills, totaling around 1000 acres. Many are under easements from The Nature Conservancy and/or Tall Timbers Research Station. Most are managed for Bobwhite Quail and other pinelands fauna and flora. As a result, they are subject to frequent prescribed burns (Kush 2001).

Blackbeard Island National Wildlife Refuge, off the coast (McIntosh County)

About 200 acres of virgin Slash Pine on a large island. The US Fish and Wildlife Service protects the forest on Blackbeard as on Wassaw and Bear Islands. Feral pigs were eradicated ten years ago, but in 1997 a few more appeared, probably from Sapelo. The Service burns the pines in winter (Robinette 1993 and 2003).

Murder Creek Research Natural Area (RNA), in Oconee National Forest, central Georgia (Putnam County)

A 996-acre RNA, about half of which is bottomland hardwood forest, apparently including old-growth stands. John Moore, District Ranger, thinks that the land on which the floodplain forest stands was all farmed at some time before the resettlement period (1993). Riddle writes that only “four or five trees” appear to have “escaped agricultural and logging activities” (2002). Nevertheless, Ben Sanders believes that the bottomland was not all clearcut, that parts of the forest are likely to have old-growth characteristics, and that the forest has the best bottomland hardwoods he has seen in Georgia (1993). According to Wharton, the RNA has at least “patches of old growth,” and trees 200 to 300 years old (1993). Species include Sugarberry, Loblolly Pine, Sweetgum, Tulip Tree, and hickory. Cottonwood are scarce, but one of the cottonwood trees is 17 feet one inch across and 134.6 feet tall (Riddle 2003a). The RNA has a problem with exotics such as Trifoliolate Orange, which the creek washes in (Moore 1993).

Magnolia Bluff, southeastern Georgia (Camden County)

An approximately 100-acre seepage slope forest, in which Southern Magnolia and Spruce Pine grow next to floodplain species such as Water Hickory, Planertree, and Pond

Cypress. The forest, which is state owned, may have been lightly cut (Wharton 1978 and 1993).

Marshall Forest Preserve, northwestern Georgia (Floyd County)

Ninety acres of virgin pine-oak and mixed hardwood forest (Rolls 1990, Hodges 2003) on a 311-acre tract owned by The Nature Conservancy. The Large-flowered Skullcap lives there. A trail for the blind passes through the pine-oak forest (Ambrose 1989, TNC Web 2002).

Titi Hammock, southwestern Georgia (Thomas County)

Approximately 75 acres of old-growth bluff or slope forest in private ownership. There is no evidence of its having been logged. The Nature Conservancy has an easement on the property (Hermann 1990, Hodges 2003).

Fernbank Forest, in metropolitan Atlanta (DeKalb County)

Mesic hardwood forest of 62 acres (Martin et al. 1993) or 65 acres (Ambrose 1989). Tulip Tree, White Oak, hickory, Loblolly Pine, Shortleaf Pine, and Northern Red Oak dominate. The forest is owned by Fernbank, Inc., a non-profit corporation dedicated to preserving the land. Fernbank, Inc. leases the forest under strict regulations to the DeKalb County Board of Education for educational purposes (Ambrose 1989, Martin et al. 1993).

Fifteen acres of little disturbed mesic hardwood forest, originally contiguous with Fernbank Forest, are now a part of the 26-acre Deepdene Park, about 200 meters to the south of Fernbank and owned by Fernbank, Inc. (Martin et al. 1993).

Moody Forest Natural Area, southeastern Georgia (Appling County)

A 3500-acre tract that includes an old-growth Longleaf Pine-Blackjack Oak forest 320 acres in extent. The oldest trees are more than 250 years in age. The stand has been "somewhat fire-excluded," but "most floral and faunal elements remain, including abundant wiregrass, gopher tortoises, and red-cockaded woodpeckers" (Kush 2001). The site is on the Altamaha River and also includes forested bluffs, cypress-tupelo sloughs, and, in the floodplain, bottomland hardwoods. The sloughs support trees more than 600 years old (TNC Web 2002). Some of the bottomlands were high graded, but cypress and tupelo as much as 10 feet across were left (Hodges 2003). Stahle reports that the area is "outstanding," although it has been selectively cut (1993). The terrace swamp forest has yet to be studied for old growth (Hodges 2003).

In 2000, The Nature Conservancy purchased the Natural Area from the Moody family, which had protected it for several generations. The Georgia Department of Natural Resources (DNR) then bought about 1700 acres of it from The Conservancy. The Conservancy and DNR will manage it jointly. Through prescribed fire, they are restoring the Longleaf ecosystem. The site is open to the public, but visitors must contact the Georgia office of The Nature Conservancy prior to visiting. "Managed hunting" is allowed (TNC Web 2002).

Adjacent swampland owned by Georgia Power in connection with its Edwin I. Hatch nuclear power plant supports forest similar to the lowland forest in the Natural Area (Riddle 2003a).

Lewis Island Natural Area, in southeastern Georgia (McIntosh County)

Two virgin patches of Baldcypress in the middle of a 5890-acre island in the Altamaha River. The old growth totals approximately 50 acres (Wharton 1978, Hodges 2003). Man-made canals are adjacent to both stands. The cypress, which are unquestionably ancient, are consistently 95 to 105 feet tall, and the largest exceed 6 feet dbh. They are columnar and not buttressed (Riddle 2003a). The island's remaining vegetation is second-growth cypress-gum swamp and bottomland hardwoods. Rare/sensitive species present are the American Swallow-tailed Kite, the Limpkin, and several endemic clams (Ambrose 1989). Sheet flow over the island may occur during storms; the only ground above water then is the raised land made from the earth dug from the canals (Riddle 2003a). The Georgia Department of Natural Resources owns the island (Ambrose 1989).

Okefenokee Swamp, southeastern Georgia and northeastern Florida

At least two pockets of old growth within the 438,000 acre swamp. Sara Brown, biologist with the Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge, is aware of only two small old-growth stands within the Refuge, both cypress: one, a peat island about 3000 feet in diameter, well known to researchers; the other a more remote site, perhaps 25 acres in size (1992). The Refuge occupies nine-tenths of the swamp, which was almost completely clearcut in the early twentieth century. John Dennis refers to two specific areas he believes were spared logging: Number One Island, and a cypress swamp between Billy's Island and Minnies Lake in the northeast. The first, at least, is not one of Brown's sites. He also describes the swamp's recovery. The swamp has fewer and smaller cypress than previously, but "as C. T. Trowell has aptly stated, 'The overall character of the Okefenokee has not changed significantly during the past 7,000 years'" (1988).

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